

**SENATOR
KEVIN P. ELTIFE**

District 1
News Release



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**ELTIFE BILL ESTABLISHING UT TYLER PHARMACY SCHOOL
PASSES SENATE**

Austin, Texas--Senator Kevin Eltife, R-Tyler, announced today that the Texas Senate passed Senate Bill 566, establishing a pharmacy school at The University of Texas at Tyler. Senator Kevin Eltife, R-Tyler, filed the bill, with Senator Robert Nichols, R-Jacksonville, included as a co-author.

“With the large medical community in East Texas coupled with the growing demand for healthcare professionals in our area, a pharmacy school at UT Tyler will be a great benefit to our economy,” Senator Eltife said. “This school will help fulfill a critical regional demand for pharmacists in addition to providing greater access to deserving East Texas students.”

The proposed pharmacy school is a public-private partnership that will be funded by philanthropic donations and student tuition. No state money will be used to operate the school now or in the future.

“UT Tyler is excited about the opportunity to add to our strong health sciences programs,” Dr. Rod Mabry, UT Tyler President, said. “Our nursing graduate programs are ranked in the top 12 in the nation, and we expect our pharmacy school to earn national recognition, as well.”

Business leaders agree strongly with the need to establish a pharmacy school at UT Tyler. They face challenges in hiring and retaining qualified pharmacists because so few are graduated relative to ever-growing demand. As a result, most pharmacists now must be imported from out of state. According to the Texas State Board of Pharmacy, 58% of Texas pharmacists licensed last year were from out of state or out of country.

“The last two pharmacists we interviewed at Brookshire Grocery Company for a Tyler position were from Arizona and Virginia,” Brookshire’s President and Chief Executive Officer, Rick Rayford, said. “As someone born and raised in Tyler, I highly valued the opportunity to study at Tyler Junior College and UT Tyler. East Texas needs a pharmacy school at UT Tyler so that our local students have the opportunity to pursue this highly sought-after degree without the additional expense and burden of travelling far from home.” Rayford continued.

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In addition to Brookshire Grocery Company, dozens of businesses and organizations have signed on in support of Senate Bill 566, including local hospitals, chambers of commerce from the entire East Texas region, the Texas Hospital Association, and the Texas Retailers Association. Area institutions of higher education from Lamar University in Beaumont to Texas A&M University-Texarkana also support the proposed school and plan to send students.

Since Senate Bill 566 has passed the Senate, the next step is for the measure to be approved by the Texas House of Representatives before being sent to the Governor. Once it becomes law, the University of Texas Board of Regents must take action to establish the pharmacy school. UT Tyler would then begin the accreditation process with the goal of accepting its first students in the Fall of 2015.

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For more information about state government, Senator Eltife encourages interested individuals to contact his office at (512) 463-0101, e-mail him at kevin.eltife@senate.state.tx.us, or visit the State of Texas website at www.texasonline.com.